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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

Executive Registry

74-6366

NSC review completed

25 NOV 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: 40 Committee

SUBJECT : Withdrawal of BUFFALO HUNTER
Drone Program from Southeast Asia

JCS review completed.

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to advise you of my recommendation to withdraw the BUFFALO HUNTER drone program from Southeast Asia at the end of Fiscal Year 1975.

Background

2. In view of the reduced funds available to the Intelligence Community, a continuing review of various programs has been undertaken with the view toward eliminating costly but non-essential programs. One such program was the BUFFALO HUNTER photographic drone program currently operating in Southeast Asia. The Defense Intelligence Agency and the State Department desire to maintain the program because they conclude that it continues to provide useful tactical military intelligence and is of value as a signal of US support to South Vietnam. In my judgment the BUFFALO HUNTER program makes only a limited contribution to national intelligence needs and its contribution to tactical intelligence is no longer commensurate with the cost.

Recommendation

3. I recommend that as a step to reduce intelligence costs, the BUFFALO HUNTER program be withdrawn from Southeast Asia at the end of FY 1975 and placed in a contingency status within the US.

DIA review(s)
completed.

2a/ W. E. Colby

W. E. Colby

cc: 40 Committee Members

State Dept. review completed

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SUBJECT: Withdrawal of BUFFALO HUNTER Drone
Program from Southeast Asia

CONCUR:

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[Redacted]
Deputy Director for Intelligence

22 NOV 1974

Date

Distribution:

Original - Addressee - *Dr. Kissinger*

- ~~1 - Dr. Kissinger~~
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- 1 - D/DCI/NIO (Mr. Carver)
- 1 - NIO/SEA [Redacted]
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BUFFALO HUNTER

file 40 Committee
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ISSUE: BUFFALO HUNTER's status for FY 76.

BACKGROUND:

- A. The question is whether or not BUFFALO HUNTER can be brought back to the United States and put in contingency status at end FY 75.
- B. BUFFALO HUNTER provides low-level photo-reconnaissance drone support for South Vietnamese forces and for monitoring the cease-fire agreement.
- C. BUFFALO HUNTER has been programmed to return to contingency status in the United States in FY 74. It was continued in SE Asia because Dr. Kissinger directed that air assets not be reduced while he was negotiating the Vietnam cease fire.
- D. In keeping with JCS strategic planning, Dr. Hall's FY 76 program guidance for the SRVP directed that BUFFALO HUNTER continue as an active mission in SE Asia. Because the Defense fiscal guidance level for SRVP was again based on bringing BUFFALO HUNTER home, the FY 76 PDM approved about \$4.4M and 257 people above fiscal guidance to keep BUFFALO HUNTER operational in SE Asia. Funds related to continuing photo-drone reconnaissance in SE Asia in FY 76 are about \$35.3M of the \$49.1M in the budget estimate for BUFFALO HUNTER.
- E. The former President requested that he and his senior advisors be kept informed on a timely basis on events in Vietnam, particularly those relating to North Vietnamese compliance with the agreed settlement. Tasks charged to the Intelligence Community, approved by the 40 Committee, are:
- Monitor North Vietnamese compliance with the settlement agreement.
 - Monitor compliance by both sides with the cease fire provisions.

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- Maintain a standby intelligence capability that can be immediately activated to provide intelligence support for any US military activity in Indochina that the President may direct.

- Provide support to South Vietnam and to the US Ambassador, Phnom Penh, on tactical and logistical information.

F. We asked the NIO for Southeast Asia to assess what the impact on the intelligence product would be if the drones were brought home and put in contingency status. His answer, attached to this paper, was essentially:

- The loss of BUFFALO HUNTER would not be critical for subjects within CIA's areas of responsibility so long as SIGINT, high altitude photography and HUMINT continue at present levels.

- The military intelligence agencies rely on BUFFALO HUNTER as a primary source for intelligence support to South Vietnamese forces. Its discontinuation would be a serious loss for contingency targeting, surveillance of Communist rear areas in SVN and warning of a Communist general offensive.

- State INR believes that withdrawal of BUFFALO HUNTER would be a political signal that the US was cutting back military support to SVN; that, barring a change in US policy, it should stay in SE Asia.

PROBLEM AREAS:

A. For unilateral US intelligence, does Defense have to have BUFFALO HUNTER photography, or can essential needs be met by other sources that provide coverage less often or in less detail?

B. What is US policy regarding US intelligence support to South Vietnamese forces?

C. Can we adequately support South Vietnamese forces if BUFFALO HUNTER is returned to contingency status in the US?

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VIEWS OF MAJOR PARTICIPANTS:

ASD(I) Staff - Believes that if the NFIP has to get down to a [] level, putting BUFFALO HUNTER in contingency status in the United States may be an acceptable way to cut [] from the budget.

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CIA - Believes that unilateral US national level intelligence needs can be satisfied without BUFFALO HUNTER in SE Asia.

State - Believes BUFFALO HUNTER should stay in SE Asia for political reasons.

DIA - Believes that if current US policy toward SVN is to be continued, BUFFALO HUNTER should remain operational in SE Asia; that, in any event, no decision to withdraw BUFFALO HUNTER should be made until the current dry season ends and the results of this season's fighting and the then-existing US policy can be considered.

IC STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. The only intelligence question is whether DoD consumers can be satisfied if BUFFALO HUNTER is brought home and put in contingency status. You should defer to Defense this question.

B. If Defense cannot support retaining BUFFALO HUNTER in SE Asia for its own requirements, we suggest you discuss with Dr. Hall whether the question of US policy regarding support to South Vietnam should be raised at the NSC level.

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